

FACT SHEET



EPA
Region 7

Great Lakes Container Superfund Site
St. Louis, Missouri

September 1998

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 7 continues its site activities at the Great Lakes Container Superfund site in St. Louis, Missouri. The site is at 42 Ferry Street, in northeast downtown St. Louis, Missouri. The site represents EPA's 5,000th removal action. A removal action is a short-term action taken to address releases or threats of releases of hazardous substances that may become a threat to human health or the environment.

Background

The Great Lakes Container site is an abandoned drum reclamation plant formerly owned and operated by the Great Lakes Container Corporation. The 11-acre site consists of several buildings built around 1910 and surrounding property now owned by the St. Louis Metropolitan Sewer District.

The facility was a box manufacturing plant from 1910 to 1949. The facility changed hands in 1949 and began operations as a drum reclamation business. Great Lakes Container Corporation purchased the plant in 1975 and continued to operate the drum reclamation business. They abandoned the facility in 1985. In addition to the hazardous substances, tires and trash were illegally dumped on the site. Hundreds of drums, some containing hazardous substances, were illegally buried at the site.

Threats

A fire on the site in 1995 alerted officials to the hazards and prompted several environmental investigations. The investigations revealed high levels of lead, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and other hazardous substances in the soil. Contamination at the site included drums of hazardous substances, asbestos insulation, a suspected drum burial pit, and a suspected buried ash pile.

Lead and PCBs are the primary contaminants of concern. Lead exposure is especially dangerous for infants and young children. Lead exposure in infants and young children has been shown to decrease IQ scores, retard physical growth, and cause hearing problems. PCBs are extremely persistent in the environment because they are very stable, non-reactive and highly heat resistant. Chronic exposure to PCBs is believed to cause liver damage.

Actions to Date

EPA conducted the following activities at the site:

- Excavated and removed 55,000 tons of contaminated soil.
- Exhumed and collected 680 drums of hazardous substances.
- Removed asbestos containing materials.
- Decontaminated and/or removed buildings, cisterns, and tanks.
- Treated and discharged 580,000 gallons of water.

Upcoming Actions

EPA will complete the following site activities by the end of this year:

- Dispose of all drums.
- Finish back filling excavated areas.
These areas will be back filled with clean soil.
- Restore the site for potential industrial use.

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